

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION, INC

and

Leadership Johns Creek Half Ton Team

Johns Creek Public Art Board 12000 Findley Road Suite 400 Johns Creek, GA 30097

January 1, 2016

Dear Members of the Public Art Board:

It is with great pleasure that we write this letter of intent regarding a permanent art installation in Newtown Park to commemorate the Native Americans who lived in this area for over 10,000 years. This memorial has been in the visioning stage for many years, but it is only within the last eighteen months that significant progress has been made, bringing it closer to becoming a reality. Our letter will outline the background story, the collaboration of two organizations, the purpose of the project, a brief history of the native people of Georgia, the potential community benefit from the project and the design of the proposed stone sculpture.

In 2002, the Newtown Park Community Foundation (NPCF) incorporated as a 501(c)3 non-profit with the support of former Fulton County Commissioner Robert Fulton and State Representative Wendell Willard, to enhance the park environment by developing passive retreat and garden areas, renovate the Historic Newtown School, and acquire additional lands. Since its incorporation, NPCF was instrumental in renovating the Newtown Community Clubhouse, building a recreation storage structure, and assisting Fulton County in saving Newtown School from demolition and acquiring recognition on the National Register of Historic Places. Among the projects that the Foundation desired to complete was some type of memorial that would recall the history of the early Americans who lived here for nearly 12,000 years.

The opportunity for a joint, collaborative effort to work on this project came in October 2014, when the Johns Creek Leadership Class, Half Ton, teamed up with NPCF. The Half Ton Team located a suitable site in Newtown Park at the junction of three paths and prepared the site for a to-be-determined monument. Work on the site included edging the blacktop path, installing an irrigation system, double digging the site by hand, enriching the soil and adding perennials. The landscaping on the site intentionally reserved a center section for the envisioned artwork. With the first phase of the project completed, the next step in this process is to finalize the sculpture design, secure approval from the City of Johns Creek and fundraise any additional monies needed to complete the project.



Leadership Johns Creek Half Ton Team at the ribbon cutting ceremony in Newtown Park



Why propose a Native American memorial for Johns Creek? Currently, there are no public memorials or commemorative works of art in the city that recognize the long history and diverse culture of the people who lived here long before European explorers ever stepped foot in the state. Many of Johns Creek's residents do not know that for ten centuries Native Americans made their homes here. A work of art that can provide visual interest and a chronological context would be aesthetically, historically and culturally enriching for everyone.

Newtown Park was chosen as the desired site for the sculpture installation because it had been a goal of the Newtown Park Community Foundation for many years. Newtown Park is the busiest of the city's parks and the walking paths serve hundreds of residents every day, so the site is extremely visible and accessible. With the site located between two ball fields, many children and families also pass by, making this an excellent location to showcase art and history. Currently, there are no works of art within view of the proposed site.

The artwork would commemorate the long history of the native people rather than just the Cherokee Nation. The Cherokees were the last Native Americans who lived and farmed here. Nearby communities have installed memorials to the Cherokees including the City of Roswell at Riverside Park and Forsyth County at the Sawnee Mountain Preserve. Capturing a broader history of Native Americans is an important goal of this project even though the historical record is difficult to verify. Among historians and scholars, the general consensus is that:

- The first people, the Paleoindians, reached the Southeast some 12,000 years ago (during the final glacial period Pleistocene).
- The Paleoindians were hunters and gatherers.
- The Archaic period followed (8000 B.C. to 1000 B.C.) and towards the end of this era plant cultivation began. (The European Bronze Age was approximately 3000 to 1000 BC)
- The Woodland period (1000 B.C. to A.D. 1000) saw advances in pottery, the bow and arrow, and more complex societies.
- The Mississippian Period (A.D. 1000 1500) marked the change to a more agrarian society and a drastic change in the cultures of tribes.
- The Historic Period (1500 present) consisted of many distinct tribes and cultures with the Creeks and Cherokees being the most prominent.

As part of the Johns Creek Leadership Team Half Ton application for their Newtown Park project, they needed to answer the question, "How does your project meet a real need in the Johns Creek Community?" They answered the question with the following information:

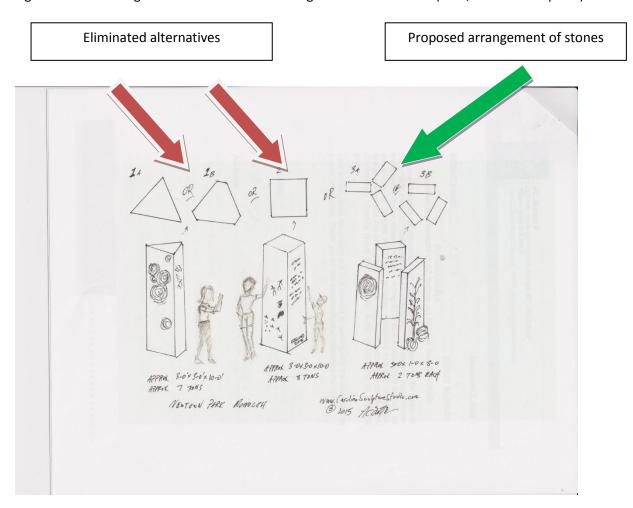
- Education of area history and Native American Culture.
- Beautification of Newtown Park with the opportunity to expand the site and project further in the future.
- Diversity is the lifeblood of Johns Creek and it is important to remember that it has been a part
 of this community since the time of the Native Americans who lived in villages along the
 Chattahoochee River and traded with each other in this area.
- The proposed Native American Memorial project emphasizes the value Johns Creek places on our long history as a community, starting as a simple trading post, long before it was ever brought together as a City.
- It will help educate visitors, and citizens alike about the people who have always valued and appreciated this area, just as we do now, and for many of the same reasons.
- The prominent placement of this memorial at the junction of walking paths in Newtown Park and very close to the Veterans Memorial Walk reinforces the community spirit of embracing and honoring our shared history and diversity.
- The project will enhance the unique landscape of Newtown Park and help create the feeling that a walk around Newtown Park is also a stroll through the rich history of Johns Creek.

How will the City be involved in this project? The Johns Creek Recreation and Parks Department has already agreed to take on the recurring costs of maintaining the landscaping surrounding the project. We would request that the City provide the base for the artwork, as they have for the recent art installation projects currently being installed. It is also our objective to provide some seating (probably two benches) that would be located on the opposite side of the path, but facing the artwork. Furthermore, we will plant additional flowers and/or native Georgia plantings around the monument/artwork.

After considering many possible sculptures, including a stone monolith that would have weighed 8+ tons, we are now proposing a three-slab Georgia blue granite edifice. The monolith was eliminated as a

viable choice because the paths/roads leading into the site could not support the weight of the truck that would be needed to transport it to its final location. By selecting three separate rock slabs (approximately 2 tons each), the weight concern is eliminated.

Each rock slab would have one design. There would be a brief explanation on the slab adjacent to it. The designs would represent several historic and cultural periods. The size of the stones would be impressive, but proportional to the site (approximately 3' x 1' x 8'). The Georgia blue granite slabs would be durable, low maintenance and not easily vandalized or climbed. Two of the designs would be representational copies of native petroglyphs that have been discovered and authenticated here in Georgia. The third design would be a realistic carving of the Three Sisters (corn, beans and squash).



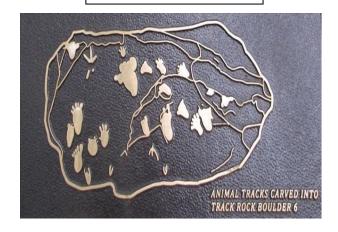
Designs for the three rock slabs:

Foot prints of humans and animals – Several petroglyphs located at Track Rock in Blairsville, GA, within the Chattahoochee National Forest contain carved animal and human footprints. Native Americans engaged in hunting throughout their history and they captured those footprints in the petroglyph carvings.

Photo of carved rock at Track Rock



Signage at Track Rock showing what was carved in one of the rocks.



2. **Spirals** – Similar in design to petroglyphs found on a rock in Cherokee County which is now housed in the Funk Heritage Center at Reinhardt College. Spiral designs were a universal symbol of diverse societies located all over the world. Although no one is quite certain what the spirals mean, there are several possible explanations including what is described on an information display in Hayesville, NC, at the Cherokee Homestead Exhibit just north of Young Harris, GA. (see below)



Funk Heritage Center at Reinhardt College

https://www.reinhardt.edu/funkheritage/highlights/rock.php



Spirals

The spiral is an important symbol to Southeastern Native Americans that may have had several meanings depending on where it was and what direction it circled. Some of its meanings might include a water symbol, coiled serpent, or Upperworld or Underworld entryway. Other interpretations may be that of the sun, or the indication of life's beginning, renewal or the circle of life.

The oval or circular marks in varying sizes are thought to represent population counts in surrounding areas.

Cherokee Homestead Exhibit in Hayesville, NC 3. **The Three Sisters** - According to Native American legend, corn, beans, and squash are three inseparable sisters who only grow and thrive together. This tradition of inter-planting corn, beans and squash in the same mounds, widespread among Native American farming societies, is a sophisticated, sustainable system that provided long-term soil fertility and a healthy diet to generations.

This proposed Native American sculpture would be a unique and distinct memorial, capturing three elements of the vast and rich culture of the first inhabitants of Johns Creek. We look forward to working with the Public Art Board and City of Johns Creek to see this vision become a reality.

Best regards,

Lynn L. Pennington

Lynn L. Pennington
President, Newtown Park Community Foundation

Paul Creamer

Team Leader, Leadership Johns Creek Half Ton Team